

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

---

#### 1-1. Purpose.

This manual establishes guidance for planning and designing unsupervised outdoor play areas to meet child safety and child development requirements. By applying this guidance, a designer can create play areas at military installations that will provide a play program that meets the needs of children with and without disabilities.

#### 1-2. Scope.

The manual provides guidelines and recommended site layouts for designing unsupervised outdoor play areas for children through age 15. Because of differing child safety and child development requirements, guidance is provided to meet the needs of three age groups: 6 weeks to 5 years; 5 to 9 years; and 9 to 15 years. Detailed design guidance is provided for designing three types of play areas: play lots serving children ages 6 weeks to 5 years or 5 to 9 years; neighborhood parks serving youth ages 9 to 15 years; and community parks serving all age groups.

#### 1-3. References.

Appendix A contains a list of references used in this manual.

#### 1-4. Definitions.

A glossary in the back of this manual provides definitions for words and phrases common to outdoor play area design.

#### 1-5. Supervised Play Areas.

Supervised play areas differ from unsupervised play areas in a number of ways. Play areas are supervised by trained recreation or child development staff, the play area is used to implement a program of developmental play activities, and daily safety inspections are performed. Supervised play areas provide opportunities to expand the play program to include activities that may be too risky or difficult to maintain in unsupervised play areas.

#### 1-6. Play Area Planning and Design Process.

Once the need for a play area is identified, the play area planning and design process can begin. Figure 1-1 illustrates the process which is the basis for this technical manual.

*a. Form a Play Area Committee.* A committee of installation staff and community representatives

should be formed to oversee the play area planning and design process and participate in design review.

*b. Select the Site.* Site selection should be coordinated with the installation master plan, and should consider the type of play area provided and the site selection guidance presented in this manual. A new site may be selected or an existing play area may be renovated.

*c. Conduct the Site Analysis and User Needs Analysis.* AH documents relevant to the play area design should be collected. Research and analysis should include a user needs analysis and a site inventory and analysis. During this process, the designer should coordinate with the play area committee.

*d. Develop Design Criteria.* Based on the information gathered, a design criteria report should be developed for the proposed play area. Once design criteria is identified, the suitability of the proposed site should be reevaluated based on this criteria. The play area committee should review the proposed design criteria.

*e. Determine Play Area Relationships.* An adjacency diagram should be selected from this manual that best reflects the play area design criteria and ages of the primary user group.

*f. Develop the Design Documents.* The designer will adapt the selected adjacency diagram to the site. The site-adapted adjacency diagram will be used to create a conceptual design and cost estimate. The conceptual design should be reviewed by the play area committee. Based on the conceptual design, the designer will produce the construction drawings and specifications. If sufficient funds are not available, a phased development plan will be created. The final design documents should be reviewed by the play area committee.

#### 1-7. The Play Area Committee.

The civil or installation engineer should organize a committee to oversee the play area planning and design process. The committee may also be responsible for fundraising and organizing self-help activities to support play area development. The committee size varies with the size of the proposed project. One committee should be organized annually to oversee all play area projects. The designer should work closely with this committee throughout the design process.

*a. Community Representatives.* The committee should include parents of children who will use the

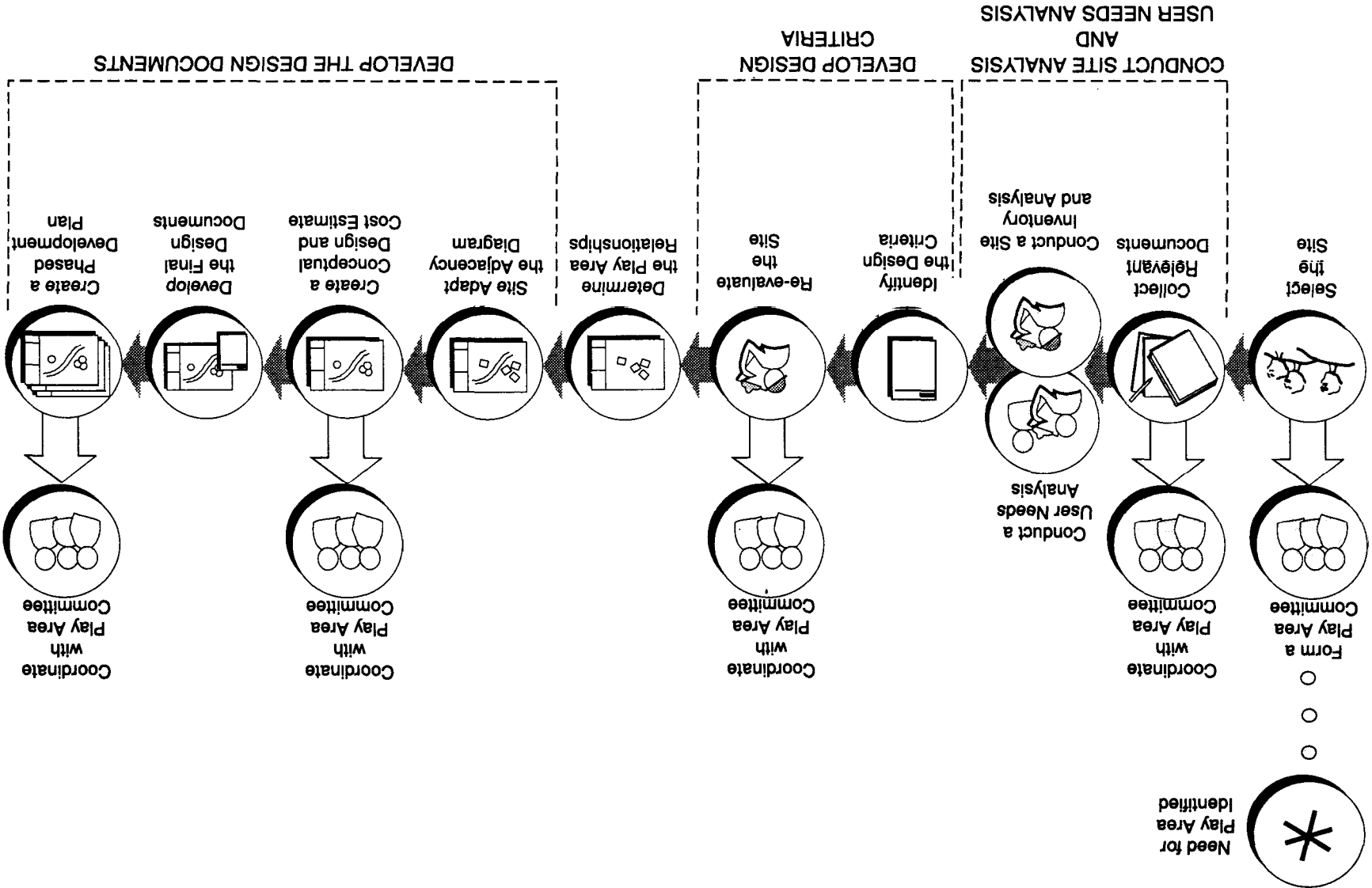


Figure I-1. Play Area Planning and Design Process.

play area. Children and youth may also be included as members. Residents with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities should be represented.

*b. Installation Staff Representatives.* The following installation staff members should be represented on the play area committee:

(1) *Safety Manager* The safety manager will ensure that the play area complies with child safety requirements as described in this manual.

(2) *Child Development Services (CDS) Representatives.* The Child Development Center Director and Child Development Services Coordinator will provide input on child development needs, the needs of family daycare providers, and child safety requirements. On most installations, CDS staff are the installation child safety experts.

(3) *Youth Services Representatives.* Youth services representatives should also provide guidance on child safety and child development requirements.

(4) *Site Designers and Landscape Architect Representatives.* The staff site designer and landscape architect should ensure that the proposed play area meets the needs of residents. In addition, designers should ensure that a maintenance plan is created to provide ongoing maintenance to meet child safety requirements and accessibility guidelines.

(5) *Civil or Installation Engineer Representatives.* The maintenance staff should review the proposed design and understand the maintenance tasks necessary to meet safety and accessibility needs. Maintenance staff input will assist in aligning the proposed design concepts to available maintenance resources.

(6) *Industrial Hygiene Representatives.* Industrial hygiene representatives should ensure that play areas meet health requirements.

(7) *Provost Marshal Representative.* The provost marshal should ensure that public safety is addressed in the play area design.